



# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



## ORGANIZING THE LOCAL CHURCH FOR CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION

By MINNA ARTHUR

*Participation in the smallest, least significant voluntary group may help many persons to be responsible Christian citizens and members of a fellowship—"no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."*

—Margaret Kuhn in *YOU CAN'T BE HUMAN ALONE*

### Define Christian Social Action

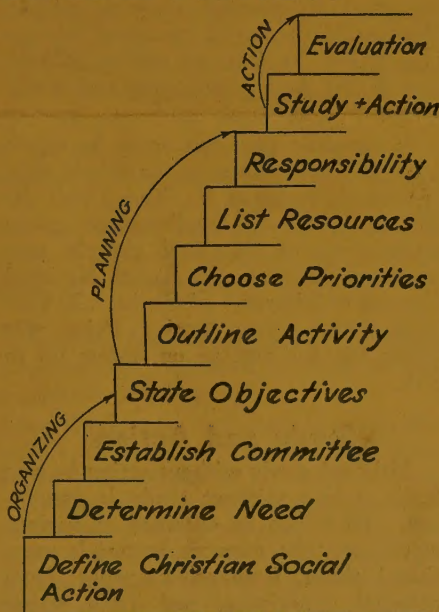
The idea for developing Christian social action in the local church may be born in a number of ways: with the minister, the layman, or a church committee. That individual or group must ask, What is Christian social action? A definition may be found in several publications of the Council for Christian Social Action. But more important than stating a formal definition is putting in words how social action relates to *that* individual and *that* church. Is there a deep and personal concern?

### Determine Need

The area of concern may be a desire to understand better the unresolved issues of a trouble world, or to solve a community problem, or to express a Christian way of life in action. "Pick a live issue and make it live." Can this area of concern be met by an already established church group? Could a Christian social action committee be of real service?

### Establish Committee

There are as many ways to form a committee as there are churches. It may be by calling together persons with a common interest or by calling together representation from established groups



in the church. One dedicated lay person may invite friends for an informal meeting. The pastor may single out key people to spark the formation of a committee. A general call to the congregation may bring together interested members for an organizational meeting.

### State Objectives

At the organizational meeting the group should state or write out its objectives. The major objective may be to solve a specific problem, but it may need to identify the Christian responsibility, based on God's word. The objectives will be more clear if time is taken for reflection and prayer.

### Outline Activity

With specific areas of concern stated, an outline of procedure can be made. A schedule, allocating time for study, for investigation, and for action is important. It may be desirable to deter-

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## AN APPROACH TO SOCIAL ACTION

By ROBERT C. GOOD

Let's assume you have recently organized a Social Education and Action Committee. You're "concerned"; but you don't quite know where or how to begin. You're wondering, too, how much the congregation can "take," and what your role should be in the light of existing (but hard to define) church attitudes. These were some of our problems at the Kirk of Bonnie Brae in Denver, Colorado. What our Social Action Committee did may be of some help to you.

Our particular concern centered on race relations—not, mind you, in the Union of South Africa 7000 miles away, nor in Little Rock, 1000 miles away, but in Denver, Colorado. Our first responsibility, we decided, was to serve the church as a *program resource*. We invited the program chairmen of all church organizations to sit with us. Would they be willing to plan race relations programs in their groups during a given month, knowing that a wide variety of program resources would be available to them through the Social Action Committee? In almost every case the answer was "yes"—and the problem of getting our audience was solved! With the help of the Council for Social Action, we put together an extensive bibliography of program materials (including local speakers) in the important areas of racial integration in our churches and racial equality in employment, education, housing, and access to public accommodations. These bibliographies went out to our church program chairmen.

Our second responsibility, we thought, was to be *program coordinator*. Keeping

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mine when the church membership should be made acquainted with a problem and when a subject should be related to the overall program of the church. A calendar of contemplated events superimposed on the church calendar may guide the group in deciding how to proceed and how to establish priorities.

### Choose Priorities

In order to stimulate the interest of the church, it is necessary to have a *short-range plan* to accomplish some quick results and a *long-range plan* setting up the program for a year or more. Solving an immediate problem may actually call for social welfare and the long-range plan for social action. Thus, the use of child labor in an undesirable place may be halted by personal or group intervention, but a law may be required to prevent recurrence of the problem in the future. To accomplish this, a source of materials and helps will be necessary.

### List Resources

The participants, from their various backgrounds, can suggest non-church-related resources, experts in particular fields of interest, community agencies, books and publications, materials from other groups working on the same problem. A list of materials, *Current and Available*, and a number of free pamphlets may be secured from the Council for Christian Social Action upon request. Other publications are available in single copies or by the hundred, at a reasonable cost.

A thoughtful plan for the use of the materials will make for the best choice of the title and quantity needed, not only for individual use but for wide distribution.

### Spread Responsibility

There has been no mention, until now, of choosing leaders, electing officers or Robert's Rules of Order. The necessary pinpointing of responsibility will follow naturally if interest and concern has first been established. A temporary chairman may investigate whatever permanent organization is needed, but beware of bogging down in organization for the sake of organization.

Enlist the cooperation of many persons, youth, laymen, women, couples,

school teachers, business men, and professional people. Be sure that all are members of the church, but do not overlook persons who may not regularly attend church functions. Shut-ins may enjoy clipping items from newspapers and magazines. Special talents may be used to provide bulletin board displays, literature tables, visual aids, articles for the parish paper, and newspaper publicity. Groups outside the church may be asked to provide resource people. Potential leaders and interested persons may be sent to state or national Christian Social Action institutes and workshops.

A pamphlet that will prove its worth over and over again in the whole field of church program is: *You Can't Be Human Alone*, a handbook on group procedures for the local church, prepared by Margaret E. Kuhn, National Council of Churches of Christ, 120 East 23rd Street, New York. Price, 40c (plus 15c for postage on orders up to \$5).

### Study and Action

Although study without action may be futile, action without study is dangerous. Facts can be obtained in various ways from the resource materials mentioned above, from other groups, from personal experience, and from go-see trips. Facts, however, do not decide issues without discussion and decision in areas of agreement. The group stimulating Christian social action is responsible for directing information and program material throughout the organizational structure of the church, relating the study to the special interests of Bible study, missionary education, stewardship, Christian education, and other program committees. Action does not necessarily mean the solution of a given problem but may result in the creation of a climate for better understanding or personal identification with the area of concern.

### Evaluation

Evaluation helps the committee to assess the effectiveness of its methods and to see its continuing responsibility. Followers as well as leaders should be involved in such appraisal and self-criticism. As the group moves from organization to participation, checklists and other devices may be used to give a sense of accomplishment and to serve as a guide to future emphases and procedures.

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in touch with the participating church groups, we succeeded in avoiding duplication and developing relevant subjects in particular groups (employment practices were discussed before the Men's Club, for example). All groups submitted their program subjects far enough in advance that the programs of the entire month, including Sunday sermons and special church-wide activities (see below), could be included in an attractive brochure available for distribution at the start of the month. We called our month-long program emphasis, "Equal Opportunity and Christian Responsibility"; and when all the pieces were fitted into place, the whole had what the ad men call "impact."

A third responsibility was obvious. In a limited sense, we would have to be a *program initiator* to supplement resources channelled through individual groups and through Sunday sermons. So a Housing Seminar was planned, a day-long affair attended by more than thirty church members and featuring a two hour bus tour of Denver's housing problems and a roundtable including local real estate agents (white and Negro) and our visiting expert, Galen Weaver. During the visit, Mr. Weaver also filled our pulpit and talked on the national race relations picture at an open meeting.

As the month drew to a close, our Social Action Committee found itself in a fourth role, *program evaluator*. We had taken the plunge, not really knowing where our fellow Christians stand or how much the church could take. There were some subterranean rumblings and once or twice a fissure appeared on the surface. A few people protested. Others feared the "fellowship" might be fractured. But how did most react? We devised a questionnaire which was mailed to 300 church homes. Incidentally the distribution of this questionnaire served to summarize the month's activities for many folks who never took the trouble to return it.

But fifty-eight questionnaires did come back—not a bad average. Eighty-five per cent expressed general approval of the program. Almost fifty per cent thought the church should move forward to some sort of "action." Thirty-six per cent favored as one relevant form of action the framing of congregational resolutions on specific aspects of the racial problem in our community. The tabulated results of the questionnaire,

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## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Recently there have been attempts by state and city governments to eliminate or suppress the activity of certain voluntary associations which are working to bring about peaceful social change through processes supported by the United States Constitution and the laws of the Nation. These attempts against voluntary associations have occurred particularly in connection with the desegregation of the public schools. Such attempts are a menace to the fundamental human rights of freedom of peaceable assembly and association and freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution.

In the Christian view, man is a creature of infinite worth in the sight of God, endowed with God-given rights. All men, and Christians in particular, are responsible to God and to their fellowmen for the defense of these rights. Among these rights are freedom of peaceable association and assembly and freedom of speech. From the Christian point of view, neither the state nor any group of men within the state can presume to grant or deny these fundamental rights.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees to all persons certain inalienable rights. For example, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble . . ." The Constitution prohibits the several states from making or enforcing any law which abridges or denies these rights.

Several states and localities are pressing this attack on voluntary associations by passing laws and using the courts to force them to reveal their membership lists. Freedom of association and freedom of speech imply a right to privacy and often depend upon it, no matter whether the given voluntary association is fraternal, civic, economic or religious in purpose and character. Subject to legal processes in harmony with the guarantees of the Constitution, anonymity of membership is necessary for the exercise of these fundamental rights.

The violation of privacy or anonymity of membership limits or suppresses the activities of voluntary associations. Moreover, it has subjected their individual members to such reprisals as loss of employment, social ostracism, and economic boycott.

The National Council of Churches urges upon the churches and churchmen that they recognize the gravity of the threat to all associations and to all liberties when the freedom of any legitimate voluntary association is assailed. The freedom of one is the freedom of all. The effort of any unit of government to eliminate or suppress a voluntary association whose purpose and activity are directed to the protection of rights guaranteed by the Constitution is a clear and present danger to the existence of the Nation as a united free and democratic society. The General Assembly therefore urges the communions constituent to the National Council, the General Board and other units of the National Council, and all Christians and other citizens to use all appropriate means at their disposal to prevent or to counteract such attacks upon our liberties.

—General Assembly, National Council of Churches.

The above statement adopted by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches on December 5, 1957 in St. Louis, Missouri affirms that all men are endowed with God-given rights, which governments may recognize and make laws to protect, but which they may not abridge. The Constitution prohibits the several states from making or enforcing any laws which abridge or deny these rights. Among these basic rights are: the right of freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom to assemble peacefully. These freedoms are essential to democratic government.

It is generally recognized that the recent attempts by state and city governments to immobilize or suppress certain voluntary organizations were aimed primarily at the National Association

for the Advancement of Colored People. This organization has been in the forefront of the struggle to use legal processes to assure the enjoyment of their constitutional rights by all citizens without discrimination.

*The NAACP has never been listed as subversive by any Federal official or agency.* It has never been called before the Senate or House committees empowered to investigate subversion. It has enjoyed the confidence of prominent Americans. Both President Eisenhower and former President Truman have addressed NAACP meetings. United States Senators have served on its board of directors. J. Edgar Hoover has given this testimony: "Equality, freedom and tolerance are essential in democratic government. The NAACP has done much to preserve these principles

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together with all written comments, were then reproduced and sent to all church members.

"This subject should be dropped as soon as possible for the good of the Kirk," one respondent said. "Just social—no economic or political issues," added another. But the overwhelming response was better summarized in the words of a church member who said: "I am extremely proud of my church for its stand as evidenced in this program." Or another: "It is a privilege to belong to a church willing to undertake such an intensive controversial study."

The moral is obvious. There was considerably more support than we had given our fellow Christians credit for. We suspect this may be true in many congregations. Why not find out?

Much more important, we had learned and demonstrated that the maturity of the Christian faith and the Christian community is not measured by the absence of controversy. (What was it Paul said about Christianity being an "Offense?") Rather, our faith ought to give us resources for facing up to the sin in ourselves and in our society, and for handling our controversies creatively.

and to perpetuate the desires of our founding fathers."

Frederick Woltman, who won a Pulitzer prize in journalism for exposing communist infiltration has said, "Of all the organizations the Reds tried to penetrate the NAACP was the least receptive. The NAACP and its leaders have sternly resisted communist inroads."

The assault upon this organization through local and state legislation goes much farther than discrediting or attempting to paralyze a single organization, serious as this is in this particular case. The National Council of Churches urges upon all church people to "recognize the gravity of the threat to all associations and all liberties when the freedom of any legitimate voluntary organization is assailed." The effort to outlaw this group is a direct threat to all organizations and the liberties of all Americans. It might well be that your freedom and mine are involved in the NAACP's struggle for freedom of speech, association, and the right of peaceful assembly.

C. L. M.



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

The Council offices are always glad to receive and report news of significant happenings in local congregations. For example, it did us good to learn that the Reverend Kenneth Rathert of St. James Church, Louisville, Kentucky, used a stenofax stencil reproduction of the line drawing and front page editorial from the March issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY as the cover for the church's Lenten bulletins.

Recently the Social Action Committee of the Washington Congregational Conference sent a copy of the CCSA pamphlet *Why Does the Church Concern Itself with Social Problems?* to every church in the conference. Almira Community Church, the Reverend Charles M. Knapp, pastor, decided it was a good thing to share with its members during February and in the Lenten Church Membership Class.

Eden Congregational Church, Hayward, California, at a specially called congregational meeting, with 525 persons out of a total membership of 1380 voting approval, adopted a resolution calling on the United States Government to work through the United Nations to stop nuclear weapons testing immediately and "to limit development of nuclear materials exclusively to peaceful applications for the benefit of all peoples." Copies of this resolution were sent to the President, the Senators from California, to various ecclesiastical and political leaders, and to the press.

Salem Riverside, (E. & R.) Buffalo, New York, and United Church (CC), Raleigh, North Carolina, are among a number of churches that have brought prominent persons to their communities.

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of the United Church of Christ

Ray Gibbons, Director

Huber F. Klemme, Associate Director and Editor

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Group subscription, 10 or more to one address, 50 cents each.

Individual subscriptions, \$2 per year with SOCIAL ACTION upon request.

General communications and orders from Evangelical and Reformed churches should be addressed to the Editor, Council for Christian Social Action, 2969 W. 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

Congregational Christians should order from Council for Christian Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

The Council for Christian Social Action unites the work of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

## AS WE PLAN

At this time of the year, churches are giving considerable thought to the work of the year ahead. Experience shows that church life does not get off to a good start in the fall unless there has been some careful preparation in spring.

With this in mind, CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY presents two articles that should be of interest and of help. In the one case, Professor Robert C. Good of the Social Science Foundation of the University of Denver gives a report on how the social education and action committee in the Kirk of Bonnie Brae went about its work this past year.

In the other, Mrs. Herbert Arthur of Ames, Iowa, presents the steps which a church might well take when it organizes for Christian social action. Mrs. Arthur is state social action chairman of the Congregational Christian Women's Fellowship, a vice-president of the Iowa Council of national television chairman of UCW. The chart which accompanies her article was drawn by her sixteen-year-old son.

At the triennial meeting, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches adopted a statement on freedom of association. We are printing the text of this statement in full, together with an interpretation of its applicability by Chester Marcus, Race Relations Secretary of the Council for Christian Social Action.

This is the last issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY until the latter part of the summer. The September issue will, however, be mailed about August 1.

Neighboring Buffalo churches joined Salem in a series of forums on "Freedom of Association," "China," "The Soviet Union," and "Is Mutual Suicide Necessary?" United Church included in its Institute of Religion Thomas P. Whitney of the Associated Press on "The Challenge of Soviet Science and Education," R. Norris Wilson of Church World Service, Mrs. Gwen Terasaki, author of *Bridge to the Sun*, Martin Luther King, Ralph McGill, Senator Hubert F. Humphrey, and Victor G. Reuther.

Would it surprise you to know that one of the nation's top Council of Economic Advisors, Mr. Joseph Davis, reads SOCIAL ACTION promptly and carefully? At least he spotted the letter of Professor Rice of Dartmouth College in the April, 1957 issue on "The Economy of Abundance," and wrote to his friend, Professor Rice. The people who are really in the know read SOCIAL ACTION. There's no doubt about that now!

## SOCIAL ACTION CALENDAR

June 20-22—Conference on the Churchman as a Citizen, Ursinus College, Collegeville, Pennsylvania.

June 30-July 12—Race Relations Institute, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.

June 30-August 8—European Study Seminar, Galen R. Weaver, Director.

July 1-5—West Coast Christian Social Action Institute, Mill Valley, California.

July 8-12—Mid-West Christian Social Action Institute, Plymouth, Wisconsin.

July 15-19—Central States Christian Social Action Institute, Oberlin College, Oberlin.

July 21-25—Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations, McCormick Seminary, Chicago, Ill.

July 22-26—Eastern Christian Social Action Institute, Framingham, Massachusetts.

August 8-27—Mexican Study Seminar, Huber F. Klemme, Director.

August 19-22—National Conference on Christian Education, Lafayette, Ind.

September 9-11—Council for Christian Social Action, Hotel Statler, Cleveland, O.

October 7-9—United Nations — World Order Seminar, New York, N. Y.

## VOTING RECORD

1958 is a Congressional election year—an important one if the commentators are to be believed. Concerned Christian citizens will want to cast their ballots with a sensitive conscience, and with reliable information about the candidates.

The Council for Christian Social Action is cooperating with a number of related agencies in other denominations in publishing a VOTING RECORD, showing how your Senators and Representatives acted on crucial issues.

The VOTING RECORD will be available about July 15 and may be secured at 5 cents per copy from either the New York or the Cleveland office.

## CHANGE IN POLICY

In order to correct inconsistencies and keep our printing costs within reasonable bounds, effective with the September issue CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY will be sent free only to pastors and to chairmen of local church committees on Christian social action, including such chairmen in the Women's Guild and the Women's Fellowship.

Other committee members and persons desiring to receive CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY are encouraged to take advantage of one of our special offers—to subscribe to SOCIAL ACTION magazine and request with it a free subscription to CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, or to order a group subscription at 50c each per year in lots of ten or more to one address.